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Culture of peace

Sustainable development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 29 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to submit a statement (see annex) by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Elmar Mammadyarov, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 15, 19 and 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 29 May 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Elmar Mammadyarov, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic

On 28 May 1918, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic — the first democracy in the Muslim world — was founded. Despite serious internal and external challenges facing the country, the ADR succeeded in setting effective State institutions, upholding the rights and freedoms of its citizens and gaining the trust of the international community. State- and democracy-building became the cornerstone and legacy of the Azerbaijani statehood.

The road to State-building began with a Declaration of Independence that affirmed the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and guaranteed universal suffrage and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Being a Muslim-majority country, Azerbaijan even surpassed the leading Western democracies in granting women the right to vote and hold office. The Government was formed on the basis of accountability and separation of powers. The democratically elected, multiparty and genuinely representative parliament of Azerbaijan has become the first of its kind in the entire Muslim Orient. In its two-year life, the Republic was governed by five executive cabinets, while the parliament held 155 meetings and discussed more than 240 legislations. Another vital pillar of the State-building process was the establishment of the Chamber of Appeals — a modern judicial system to check the legislative and executive powers.

The newly established Republic made education a primary objective. As a result of the consistent efforts to that end, the Baku State University was founded. Despite economic and political difficulties, Azerbaijan aspired for long-term human capital investment by providing scholarships for hundreds of young students to study in leading European universities. Azerbaijani was declared the official language, the national tricolour flag and anthem were adopted, a modern theatre and opera were established, Azerbaijani postage stamps were printed and national currency — manat — was issued.

Diplomatic activities within the Republic took place even before gaining independence. The leading political figures applied their first-hand diplomatic experiences within the Transcaucasian Commission and subsequently became the advocates and promoters of Azerbaijan's interests abroad. The most important foreign policy objective for the Republic was to attain international recognition and to establish diplomatic ties at a time when war-torn Europe and new international order were being formed.

Just two days after declaring independence, the newly formed Government of the ADR sent an official statement on proclamation of Azerbaijan's independence to the main world political centres. A week later, Azerbaijan signed its first friendship treaty with Turkey.

The visit to Paris of the parliamentary delegation of Azerbaijan, headed by Mr. Alimardan Topchubashov, to gain international recognition for the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was the first major breakthrough in diplomatic relations. The members of the delegation to the Paris Peace Conference impressed foreign dignitaries by their ideas of liberty, rights and justice. Unanimous de facto recognition

of Azerbaijan was attained in January 1920 and its mission received an invitation to the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference.

At the same time, the Government had undertaken efforts towards building a competent diplomatic corps, as well as sending and receiving missions.

To counter unwarranted propaganda by Armenian nationalistic circles, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the ADR had established contacts and dialogue with peoples throughout the world. As the Caucasus was a territory largely unknown to Western public, the Armenian side launched a wide campaign based on historic deceptions to mask their territorial claims to neighbouring countries. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic also developed close ties with Azerbaijanis living abroad, effectively giving rise to the concept we now call Motherland — Diaspora relations.

In April 1919, the Allied Powers recognized the provisional General-Governorship of Karabakh, which was established by the ADR in January 1919 and included Shusha, Javanshir, Jabrayil and Zangazur provinces, with the centre in Shusha town, to be under Azerbaijani jurisdiction, and Mr. Khosrov bay Sultanov as its Governor.

In 1919, diplomatic missions of 16 States had functioned in Baku, including Belgium, France, Iran, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the USA.

However, the Bolsheviks' invasion in April 1920 put an end to the independence of the ADR. Despite serious resistance to the Bolsheviks in many parts of the country and continued efforts of the Azerbaijani delegation at the Paris Peace Conference to achieve de jure recognition and admission to the League of Nations, Soviet rule was established in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan restored its independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The dissolution of the USSR left Azerbaijan in deep economic crisis, dysfunctional State institutions and internal instability. Taking advantage of the situation, Armenia launched large-scale military operations on the territory of Azerbaijan to realize its groundless annexationist claims. The Armenian aggression resulted in ethnic cleansing and occupation of twenty per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan and made more than 1 million Azerbaijanis internally displaced or refugees.

The recovery and reforms process in the country had started only after 1993. Despite serious domestic problems and external pressures, national leader Mr. Heydar Aliyev managed to place Azerbaijan on a strategic path aimed at preserving the sovereignty of our country and achieving economic growth, paving the way for long-term sustainable development. Public institutions were reinstated and the first national Constitution in the history of Azerbaijan was adopted.

What had lacked in 1918 — a stable and growing economy — Azerbaijan achieved once it restored its independence in 1991. The Contract of the Century, signed in 1994, introduced a flow of investments into Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector and had remarkable multiplying effects for the economy and society. This milestone event ensured a breakthrough in oil diplomacy and can be considered as a turning point for national recovery.

The promotion of good governance and successful economic policy laid the foundation for gradual overcoming of socioeconomic problems, generating high economic performance and growth, ensuring better living standards, health care and overall prosperity.

Regrettably, while Azerbaijan has flourished in progress and well-being, twenty per cent of our territory — the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven

surrounding districts — remain occupied and viciously exploited by the Republic of Armenia. The continuing Armenian aggression prevents hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from returning to their homes and properties in safety and dignity. Therefore, the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is the number one priority of our foreign policy. We will continue working with our partners and global and regional international organizations with a view to mobilizing support for the just and lasting settlement of the conflict within the territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan. However, the success of the peace process depends on a constructive approach and faithful observance of international law on the part of Armenia, as well as on the active contribution of the international community.

In just two decades, Azerbaijan has risen to become a reliable international partner, in both political and economic dimensions. Rooted in transparency and predictability, Azerbaijan's foreign policy attracts mutually advantageous bilateral and multilateral relations with both regional and global powers. Encouraged by the successful implementation of oil, gas and transportation projects, such as the construction and operationalization of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines, as well as the Baku-Tbilisi-Qars railway and East-West Trans-Caspian route, Azerbaijan is increasingly viewed as a pivotal player in the region and an important actor in the international arena as an energy producer, exporter and transit country. Azerbaijan's strategic geographic location at the intersection of the major trade routes along the East-West and North-South transport and energy corridors provides an important asset to turn the country into an energy, transport and infrastructure hub.

A highly ambitious initiative on Azerbaijan's part has been the construction of the Southern Gas Corridor. In June 2018, we will be marking the inauguration of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline, the largest portion of the Southern Gas Corridor. We look forward to operationalizing the Trans-Adriatic pipeline by next year. A key objective of these gas pipeline projects is to address Europe's energy security concerns. Once the Southern Gas Corridor is completed, gas produced from the Caspian field will be transported through the territories of Georgia, Turkey, Greece and Albania into Italy, and from where it will be distributed throughout Europe. The Southern Gas Corridor is one of the global oil and gas industry's most significant and ambitious undertakings, which has proved to be vital in developing partnerships between Azerbaijan and Europe.

Azerbaijan's role as a natural bridge between East and West creates opportunities not only in providing transport routes, but also in connecting peoples and ideas from all over the world and overcoming prejudice and intolerance. Situated on the historical crossroads between East and West, Azerbaijan has absorbed the values of both civilizations and cultures.

The idea of independence inspired by the founders of the ADR has never been forgotten. The policy pursued later by the national leader, Mr. Heydar Aliyev, strengthened and further developed the sense of national identity by reviving our deep historical and cultural memory and instilling a firm conviction in us — modern Azerbaijanis — to preserve and safeguard our independence and statehood. Treasuring Mr. Heydar Aliyev's statehood policy, the people of Azerbaijan celebrates this year the 28th of May — Republic Day — with the sense of high pride and spiritual rise. The proclamation of 2018 as the year of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, as well as the Decree by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, to ensure due commemoration of the centennial of the ADR, are vivid manifestations of the aforementioned.

Looking ahead, for us it is imperative to continue our path of conducting independent foreign policy based on proactive strategy aimed at realizing what was bequeathed by the founders of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic — defending and promoting the national interests of the Republic of Azerbaijan, strengthening the country's independence and sovereignty.